United Nations S/PV.7788

Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7788th meeting
Tuesday, 11 October 2016, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Iliichev	(Russian Federation)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Gimolieca
	China	Mr. Xu Zhongsheng
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Japan	Mr. Okamura
	Malaysia	Mrs. Adnin
	New Zealand	Mr. Taula
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Spain	Mr. González de Linares Palou
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Mr. Pressman
	Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Suárez Moreno

Agenda

The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/2016/833)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council. Corrections* should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

16-31777 (E)

Accessible document Please recycle

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/2016/833)

The President (*spoke in Russian*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Maman Sidikou,Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Head of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to participate in this meeting

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2016/833, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear briefings by Mr. Maman Sidikou, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Head of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Ambassador Amr Abdellatif Aboulatta, Permanent Representative of Egypt, in his capacity as the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

I give the floor to Mr. Sidikou.

Mr. Sidikou (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Sir, for the opportunity to speak on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I shall focus my remarks on the political, humanitarian and security situations, the challenges facing the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the support that the Security Council could offer to the collective efforts of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and international and regional partners.

The political situation remains extremely fragile in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which contributes to increased tensions, the ongoing contraction of the political space, and a very real risk that the situation could deteriorate further. Despite the efforts of the Facilitator appointed by the African Union, Mr. Edem Kodjo, and the continued support of the United Nations and the international community for those efforts, progress in the national dialogue has been limited, although we have recently heard that developments are moving apace in the right direction.

In September, Mr. Kodjo presented a proposal for consideration by the parties to reach agreement, first, on the duration of a political transition and the role of the outgoing President beyond the interim period; secondly, the establishment of a transitional Government and key portfolios; and thirdly, a date for the holding of the presidential election. However, due to the boycott of the national dialogue by the opposition coalition known as the Rassemblement des forces politiques et sociales acquises au changement, and more recently the withdrawal of the Conférence épiscopale nationale du Congo from the dialogue, agreement on these issues has not been reached. Moreover, the dialogue process is not as inclusive as one might have hoped.

In the course of one session of the national dialogue, the National Independent Electoral Commission announced that the holding of presidential, parliamentary and provincial elections in one day would not be technically possible until 18 November 2018, following the registration of voters to be completed 31 July 2017. This announcement has provoked strong protests from several political opposition parties that believe that Commission has been instrumentalized to keep President Joseph Kabila in power beyond the presidential term limits set out in the Constitution. On 4 October in Kinshasa, the Rassemblement held a conclave whose recommendations reiterate, inter alia, a call for the resignation of President Kabila on 19 December. The conclave also announced its intention to organize political demonstrations across the country on 19 October.

(*spoke in English*)

Against this background of political polarization, serious violence erupted on 19 and 20 September following large-scale demonstrations in Kinshasa and elsewhere. The United Nations has confirmed the killing of at least 49 civilians in the clashes that took place — 38 by gunshot — while others were burned alive or killed by machete. More than 140 civilians were injured, and there are unconfirmed reports of dozens of other casualties. Four police officers were also killed, allegedly by demonstrators, during the clashes.

MONUSCO investigations have documented the involvement of State and non-State actors alike. We have also documented the involvement of the Garde républicaine in several instances of violence against civilians. There were hundreds of arrests reported, and more than 100 people were initially detained in a military camp before being transferred to State courts. Unfortunately, in the immediate aftermath of the clashes, MONUSCO was denied access to detention centres, several hospitals and morgues, making confirmation of the casualties and arrests difficult. Moreover, those demonstrations impacted civil and political rights in other parts of the country where demonstrators were also reportedly arbitrarily arrested and ill-treated by State agents.

While not directly related to the electoral context, the situation prevailing in Kananga, the capital of Kasai Central province, is also a matter for serious concern, with reports of several clashes between militiamen affiliated to a traditional leader, including child soldiers, and State actors, which impinge on the human rights of the civilian population, including children's rights, causing widespread displacements. Here again, MONUSCO's presence in Kananga is very limited, and the force is not present, which is an additional risk to protecting civilians. Nonetheless, the Mission is actively monitoring the situation and has deployed a team of human rights and political affairs officers to better monitor, report on and analyse developments in the area. We have also engaged with political authorities, local leaders and members of civil society to find a peaceful solution to this crisis.

For our part, we have consistently called for restraint on the part of all actors, including opposition members, and I have personally raised our concerns with my Government interlocutors about the role of State actors in the violence. Throughout the past months I have worked with other stakeholders, including the diplomatic community, civil society and, importantly, the Church, to build bridges between the Facilitator — Mr. Kodjo — the presidential majority and opposition groups. I have also liaised closely with the Government to take confidence-building measures to create political space for dialogue, notably through the release of political prisoners and allowing media to operate without constraint.

The Mission has also reinforced its presence in Kinshasa with additional assets, which will allow for a greater presence and improved monitoring of the situation. The Mission will continue monitoring closely and reporting on the political, security and human rights situation. Also, MONUSCO will continue to impress upon the national authorities and security services the need to manage public order in accordance with the Constitution and international standards. An important effort will also continue to be dedicated to engaging all political actors on the need to find a peaceful resolution to differences linked to the electoral process and the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

While much attention is currently focused on the political situation, I would like to highlight the fact that the security situation in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo remains very worrying and is characterized by severe protection-of-civilians risks in many communities. Those tensions are only increasing throughout the electoral period.

In the Beni area, where a serious massacre took place in August, small-scale attacks on civilians by suspected elements of the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) have continued in recent weeks. Violence in the broader northern Lubero area has contributed to a surge of displacement, with more than 100,000 people displaced in the past three months alone.

In that context, the protection of civilians remains the highest priority of MONUSCO, one that requires every component of the Mission to play a role. Of critical importance is the ability of the Mission to act quickly and effectively to early-warning threats of violence, based on a solid understanding of the dynamics of a given situation. In Beni, where protection threats are severe, MONUSCO has established a joint analysis-collection and early-warning cell, which brings together civilian, police and force elements to provide cross-cutting analysis and direction to the Mission's operations. This is a positive development that has already enhanced the

Mission's response and effectiveness. We are looking to further develop those capacities to support the Mission's tailored strategies against all priority armed groups, including the newly mandated area of criminal networks in resolution 2277 (2016).

In support of those strategies, MONUSCO has continued to carry out military operations against armed groups, based on solid cooperation between the force and the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC). In Eringeti, ongoing joint operations against ADF positions over the past several months have dislodged ADF elements from several key locations and allowed the FARDC to establish a more consistent presence in the affected areas. Those operations against the ADF have seen the FARDC in the front lines, supported closely by MONUSCO. The operations have cleared key ADF camps in the so-called triangle area and have disrupted their operations and supply lines. The challenge ahead will now be to consolidate the gains and assist the FARDC in building up its control in the area.

Robust peacekeeping requires a proactive approach and looking to deter violence before it happens. I believe the Security Council could usefully reinforce that message with the troop-contributing countries as we continue to work together to make the Mission more effective in its protection mandate.

In the context of the continued violence in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, I would like to highlight an immediate concern with regard to the national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programme. Following violence in the DDR camps in Kamina and Kitona over the summer, the Government initiated the return of more than 1,000 ex-combatants to communities in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. While the reintegration of ex-combatants into communities is an essential part of the DDR process, that move was taken before the Government and the World Bank-funded partners had adequately prepared. Without sufficient sensitization and preparation, there is a risk that those ex-combatants may cycle back into armed groups, or exacerbate already high tensions in communities where they return. MONUSCO has worked to implement its community violence-reduction programme to support the transition of ex-combatants back into civilian life. However, it is critical that the Government, the World Bank and implementing partners move quickly to put in place the necessary community reintegration measures, if further returns from the camps are to take place in a constructive manner.

As I mentioned, population movements in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in particular have increased the risks to already vulnerable communities. That has stretched already strained humanitarian delivery systems beyond their means. I am pleased to report that the humanitarian community has brought life-saving assistance to more than 3.5 million people this year, but that still falls far short of those in urgent need. Currently, the 2016 humanitarian appeal of $690 million is only half funded. With continued displacements, an additional 350,000 refugees arriving from South Sudan and epidemics, such as the recent outbreak of cholera, we expect the needs to continue to grow in 2017. I hope the Council will join me in urging for greater support to those most in need in the the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The Democratic Republic of Congo has entered a period of extreme risk to its stability. The electoral crisis has become a constitutional crisis, with deepening political polarization and no immediate resolution in sight. Actors on all sides appear more and more willing to resort to violence to achieve their ends, while the space for constructive political activity has shrunk still further. If that trajectory continues, I believe large-scale violence is all but inevitable. And while MONUSCO will do everything it can within its mandate to protect civilians, the scope of the threats dramatically outstrip the Mission's capabilities.

The only solution is for the parties to re-engage in an inclusive process that charts a peaceful path forward for the country. I have remained actively engaged with all of the national, regional and international stakeholders, and I believe there is a chance for the key parties to come together in a credible, inclusive manner. However, they will not do so without engagement by all of us, including the Security Council. I hope the Council will speak collectively and individually to reinforce the following key messages.

First, the Rassemblement des forces politiques et sociales acquises au changement and other key stakeholders currently boycotting should be encouraged to return to the dialogue process. Secondly, the Government should be encouraged to undertake direct confidence-building measures with the opposition, including steps to ensure the rights of peaceful political activity are preserved and ensure direct engagement

between President Kabila and the leadership of the Rassemblement, namely, Mr. Tshisekedi.

Thirdly, there should be no impunity for any actor perpetrating political violence. Finally, the regional organizations, that is, the African Union, the Southern African Development Community, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the Economic Community of Central African States, working in close consultation with the United Nations, need to engage more directly, including through efforts to designate a high-level emissary to help bridge the political divide.

(*spoke in French*)

In conclusion, I should like to stress that the coming period will almost certainly be extremely difficult. The tipping point in the serious violence could be reached very quickly. I believe that the Council should remain actively seized of the situation and endeavour to hold regular exchanges with the Secretariat leadership and MONUSCO in coming months.

I am very grateful for the opportunity given me to convey to the Council certain observations on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and I hope that together, along with the Congolese people, we can chart a more positive course for the country.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank Mr. Sidikou for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ambassador Aboulatta.

Mr. Aboulatta: At the outset, I should like to thank you, Mr. President, for having provided me with this opportunity to brief the Council in my capacity as Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

This is my first time briefing the Council in this open format; I should like to stress that Egypt has been honoured to chair this Committee since the beginning of its membership in the Security Council.

During my most recent briefing to the Council, in closed consultations last June, I highlighted some of the findings and recommendations contained in the final report of the Group of Experts, extended pursuant to resolution 2198 (2015), and also touched upon the Committee's consideration of the report. I also provided a brief overview of possible activities that were being considered by the Committee.

In my statement today, I intend to provide an update on the work of the Committee since my last briefing and discuss possible avenues for enhancing the effectiveness of the sanctions regime.

Egypt, together with the members of the Committee, is fully aware of the tremendous challenges facing the Democratic Republic of the Congo, particularly this year. Members of the Committee are determined to ensure that the work of the Committee and its Group of Experts contribute significantly to achieving peace and stability in the country. It was within this context that I visited the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda from 1 to 6 August. The trip itself represented only the second time since the establishment of the Committee in 2004 that a Chair of the Committee had travelled to the Great Lakes region. In this connection, I should like to extend my utmost appreciation to the Government of those three countries for their cooperation and for facilitating the visit.

I should like also to take this opportunity to convey my personal thanks to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Maman Sidikou and his team in the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), which provided invaluable assistance during the visit.

A number of themes resonated during the course of the visit and the several meetings I had with Government interlocutors and representatives of civil society and the diplomatic community. They included the growing tension over the uncertainty in the electoral cycle, the security situation in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and measures to counter the illicit trade in natural resources. During my trip to Beni and Erengeti, I was able to hear first-hand the frustrations of the population over the persistence of violence and the continued suffering inflicted upon them by the armed groups.

As I approach the end of my first year as the Chair of this regime, I am of the view that the sanctions regime remains vital to addressing the critical issue that the Democratic Republic of the Congo faces. In this connection, the Committee is continuing to work to enhance the effectiveness of the sanctions regime by focusing on, among other things, improving cooperation with regional States and the effective implementation of the sanctions measures. I therefore paid attention to promoting a better understanding of the work of the sanctions Committee during my visit

to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and to the region, and I encourage interlocutors to raise issues of concern that could be relayed to the Committee in New York.

The key point that I would like to raise here today is that the regime was established to work with the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to promote peace in the country. Towards this end, I encourage officials to cooperate with the Group of Experts by facilitating their visits and providing information as appropriate and welcome a continued dialogue with Government officials, as well as express the hope that the visit will serve to further facilitate and strengthen cooperation.

Following my visit, I capitalized on the momentum back here in New York by following up informally with the representatives of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda. Yesterday, 10 October, the Committee also met with those States and other States of the region during formal consultations to continue our reflection on how to improve the implementation of the measures and enhance collaboration. I should like to stress that these questions require thoughtful consideration by the Committee and a renewed engagement with the States of the region, with a view to enhancing the effectiveness of the sanctions regime and its contribution to the stabilization effort.

I am also aware of the fact that key challenges continue to impede the achievement of peace in the successful implementation of the sanctions regime. Armed groups, in particular the Allied Democratic Forces, remain a major threat to peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Forces démocratiques pour la libération du Rwanda, while causing significant disruption to border communities, is reportedly more fragmented and weakened. However, it remains critical to continue working to limit the capacity of these armed groups to pose a threat not only to the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo but also to the region. I would like to seize this opportunity to acknowledge the new momentum in the cooperation among the countries of the region in this regard.

Another issue of key concern remains the illicit exploitation of natural resources. The potential for armed groups to benefit from illicit exploitation and smuggling remains great, and criminal networks inside and outside the Democratic Republic of the Congo indirectly support armed groups and contribute to the instability. As Chair, I will continue to focus on these matters and encourage the Group of Experts and the Committee to remain vigilant, including by discussing means to help country address this matter.

Lastly, the rising political tension in the country has the potential to further exacerbate the security situation and undermine the hard-fought gains made in stabilizing the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In conclusion, I should like to note that in addition to our focus on humanitarian concerns and the related attacks by armed groups, the illicit exploitation of natural resources and cooperation with regional States, the Committee has also continued to engage with the Group of Experts towards the regular and timely submission of reports concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I therefore stress the fact that support for the work of the Group remains critical for the implementation of the sanctions regime.

Furthermore, and in ensuring regular discussion and information-sharing with the relevant actors, the Secretariat has contacted the Office of the Special Representatives on Sexual Violence in Conflict and for Children in Armed Conflict for additional information-sharing with the Committee on humanitarian-related issues pertaining to their respective mandates. I intend to invite both Special Representatives to provide briefings to the Committee in the context of informal consultations.

Finally, as mandated by the Security Council, the Group of Experts will be presenting its mid-term report to the Committee during the month of December. Following the Group's presentation and after the publication of the report, I also intend to invite the States of the region to present to the Committee their views on the report. This will further continue to enhance our engagement and cooperation with those States.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank Ambassador Aboulatta for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to the members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Mr. Rosselli (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me at the outset to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Maman Sidikou, for having introduced the report of the Secretary-General on the

situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/2016/833).

I should like also to thank Mr. Sidikou's entire team, as well as the personnel of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), for the work that they have been doing in the country. I should like also to thank the Permanent Representative of Egypt, Mr. Amr Aboulatta, for his introduction in his capacity as Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

I should like to reiterate Uruguay's commitment to the stability and the establishment of peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, not only as an elected member of the Security Council, but also as a country contributing troops to MONUSCO, which we have been doing without interruption for the past 16 years.

Uruguay is deeply concerned about the stalled electoral process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which is increasing political tensions and generating numerous incidents. There is a pressing need to unblock that situation, and the only way to do so is through inclusive, good-faith and transparent dialogue among all national political actors. Political actors, which should act in the interests of the country and its inhabitants, have an enormous responsibility of garnering the necessary consensus to hold credible elections without undue delays, if they are to avoid an escalation of tension and violence. Similarly, we once again call upon the political groups that have not yet joined to dialogue process to do so and to play a constructive role that will contribute to the timely holding of credible elections.

We are also concerned about reports on increases in civil and political rights abuses, including violations of the freedom speech and assembly, committed even by Government linked forces or personnel. In that regard, it must be clear that sooner or later those responsible should be brought to justice and held accountable for their actions.

Finally, Uruguay regrets every civilian death over the past few months, including those that occurred during the Kinshasa protests on 19 September and those in Beni in the month of August, allegedly carried out by armed groups.

Mr. Suárez Moreno (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): We agree with the representative of Uruguay on the issue of making the discussions in the Security Council more transparent to the broader membership, and that is why we have asked for the floor today.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is grateful for the briefing of Mr. Maman Sambo Sidikou, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), to whom we pay tribute. We also commend him for his excellent work as an intermediary and for supporting the efforts carried out by the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to bolster national security and stability.

We also take this opportunity to thank the Ambassador of Egypt for his briefing.

We are closely following the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We welcome the national dialogue that started in September, launched by the initiative of Joseph Kabila's Government, with the main political stakeholders of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. That dialogue, in the context of the current political, economic and security reality in that country, should aim to establish a road map that, in consideration of costitutional provisions, will enable consensus to break the deadlock with regard to the upcoming electoral process.

In that regard, we regret that the increase in political tensions has led to violent protests in recent weeks by opposition members attempting to boycott the national dialogue initiative. To that end, we urge all the country's political actors to abstain from acting in a way that could promote violence. In that connection, we believe that an ongoing, inclusive, constructive dialogue is the only way to jump-start the stalled electoral process.

The Security Council should send a message of solidarity to the Support Group for the Facilitation of the National Dialogue in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, led by the African Union-appointed Facilitator and former Prime Minister of Togo, Mr. Edem Kodjo, who has the support of the Group, made up of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the Southern African Development Community, the European Union, the International Organization of la Francophonie and the United Nations.

We believe that the facilitation of political dialogue is essential to maintaining and consolidating governance an stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. As such, it should enjoy the backing of the international community, as it relates to the sovereignty and political independence of that country. In that regard, we welcome the fact that MONUSCO continues to provide technical and logistical support to the Independent National Electoral commission in reviewing and updating the voter rolls and in encouraging financial contributions to the United Nations Development Programme Administrative Fund to facilitate the election cycle in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We reiterate our concern about the violence sparked by rebel groups, both Congolese and foreign, that operate in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which exacerbates the humanitarian situation in the east of the country. Such actions have contributed to the increase in the number of internally displaced persons, clashes between communities and a heightened lack of security.

We value the ongoing work of MONUSCO in supporting the the implementation of the national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme, as well as on the repatriation, resettlement and reintegration of ex-combattants. In that regard, the measures enacted over the past decade by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and better financing for national social assistance programmes to help ex-combattants during their reintegration are essential to promoting disarmament, the protection of civilians and human rights.

Finally, we are convinced that the consolidation of the presence and authority of the Congolese State, together with renewed trust in the framework of strategic dialogue with MONUSCO, continue to be vital elements to overcoming armed violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In that process, the sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo must be ensured, in keeping with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to the representative of Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Gata Mavita wa Lufuta (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate, Sir, on the Russian Federation's accession to the presidency of the Security Council for the month of October and to convey my delegation's high esteem for the skilled steering of our deliberations since the beginning of the mon.h. I would also like to take this opportunity to convey my appreciation to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Gerard Van Bohemen, Permanent Representative of New Zealand, for the manner in which he presided over the work of the Council in September. Finally, I would like pay heartfelt tribute once again to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who has made enormous efforts and sacrifices throughout his mandate to bring peace and security to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and to the Great Lakes region in Africa.

My delegation has very closely followed the final report (see S/2016/466) of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Secretary-General's report (S/2016/833) on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which were touched on in the brifings by Mr. Amr Abdellatif Aboulatta, President of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Mr. Maman Sambo Sidikou, Special Representative of the Secretary-General in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. While we welcome the successes set forth in both reports, allow me to mention several points that require clarification from us. Primarily, they relate to events that occurred on 19 and 20 September in Kinshasa, the electoral process and the national political dialogue under way — and, more broadly, the security in the east of my country.

As the Council has monitored, a faction of the opposition that does not participate in the national political dialogue under way in my country decided to organize a peaceful march in Kinshasa on 19 September to protest the holding of elections and to submit a petition to that effect to the Independent National Electoral Commission at its headquarters. After having requested authorization and in accordance with the law on meetings and demonstrations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the itinerary to be followed and starting time of the demonstration were agreed with the Governor of the city of Kinshasa, who authorized its organization.

While, according to organizers, the march was supposed to begin at noon, it was noted that in the very early morning and the evening before, in certain sections of the city, barricades were raised and tires burned along

several thoroughfares that were not supposed to be part of the demonstration's itinerary. Moreover, calls to loot and pillage the houses belonging to politicians of both the majority and the opposition, who were participating in the dialogue, were launched on social networks by supporters of the march's organizers.

The municipal authorities' efforts to reach out to the organizers and ask them to calm the demonstrators were in vain. Against that backdrop, the situation degenerated and the march become a genuine insurrection. Demonstrators armed with stones attacked the police. They targeted a 12-year-old girl in uniform on her way to school, raping and then killing her. They burned alive a policeman stationed outside a political party's headquarters after stripping him of his weapon, and then proceeded to kill three other policemen who were trying to restore order.

The demonstrators subsequently looted private and public property, maliciously destroyed schools and gas stations, set ablaze the headquarters of the political parties of the majority and the opposition taking part in the national dialogue, and set fire to police stations and the district court of Matete. The violence continued on 20 September with the destruction and burning of other property, including the headquarters of opposition parties not participating in the national dialogue.

The situation was finally brought under control thanks to the efforts of the police who managed to disperse the demonstrators using tear gas and not by firing live ammunition, as stated in the Secretary-General's report. Those events led to the deaths of 32 people, including four policemen. More than a 100 perpetrators of criminal acts during the demonstrations were arrested. They were apprehended in the act, and approximately 100 of them were sentenced to terms ranging from 45 days to 25 years in prison. Approximately 30 were acquitted.

With regard to the national political dialogue, it seems important to reaffirm to the Council that the dialogue process was initiated by the President of the Republic to allow all active forces of the country, including a variety of politicians and actors from civil society and religious and traditional authorities, to agree on the means to overcome the obstacles standing in the way of peaceful elections and establishing a consensus in connection with the ongoing process. In that regard, my Government wishes to see all actors participate in the dialogue. Unfortunately, a fringe group of the opposition, united under what is known as the Rassemblement des forces politiques et sociales acquises au changement is boycotting the dialogue, which at one time was supported by some of the political parties within the Rassemblement.

For its part, my Government has responded favourably to a number of demands made by the opposition in order to defuse political tensions and promote broad inclusiveness in the dialogue. Those demands were mainly focused on the appointment of an international Facilitator and an international support group for the Facilitator, as well as the release of so-called political prisoners and the reopening of media outlets belonging to the opposition. In addition to the Government's efforts, the Facilitator has also striven to establish contacts with all the constructive forces within and outside the country to achieve this inclusiveness.

The segment of the opposition that rejects dialogue and makes ever-new demands, undoubtedly to more effectively delay the process, went so far as to reject the Facilitator, demanding that the African Union appoint another one. With the help of the international support group — comprising the Special Envoy and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and representatives of the European Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the International Organization of la Francophonie, and the Southern African Development Community — the Facilitator has been working on the dialogue since 1 September. Although the work of the dialogue remains unfinished, it would truly be in bad faith not to acknowledge the largely positive results that have been recorded thus far. Indeed, the participants in the dialogue have agreed on a number of points, in particular the electoral register.

Having considered the reports of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the International Organization of la Francophonie and the Independent National Electoral Commission, the participants agreed to draw up a completely new register to ensure the holding of credible elections and to avoid the challenging of results. The update of the register will take 16 months and end in July 2017. Meanwhile, the voter registration process has already begun in Gbadolite, North Ubangi province.

With regard to the sequence of elections, the participants in the dialogue agreed to combine the presidential, national legislative and provincial elections so that they could be organized on the the same date,

while municipal and local elections will be able to take place later. In terms of the transition, in accordance with article 70 of the Constitution, they agreed that the current Head of State should remain in office until his successor assumes his functions and a Government of broad national unity, composed of representatives of the majority, the political opposition and civil society, is set up to allow for the collegial and transparent governance of the transition. They also agreed that no members of this Government would be able to run as a candidate in the presidential election.

With regard to the electoral calendar, as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General just mentioned, a draft electoral calendar was proposed by the National Independent Electoral Commission. The participants will discuss that in order to agree on the date for the presidential election combined with the national legislative and provincial elections.

On the issue of the political agreement, at the end of the dialogue the parties agreed to sign an agreement that will reprise all the points on which they will have agreed, along with the dates of the elections.

Some countries criticize the Government of my country for not having called for elections on 19 September and demand a broadening of political dialogue and other confidence-building measures, such as the release of other political prisoners and the inclusion of certain figures, whose presence they have judged important in the dialogue. My delegation recalls that the dialogue concerns first and foremost the Congolese people who, through international facilitation, are debating, in the context of their country's best interest, issues on the agenda and on which they have previously agreed in order to allow for the electoral process — as we have always stressed — to take place in a peaceful environment. Partners of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, wishing to contribute to finding solutions to the situation in my country, are called upon to do so with the consideration and respect that we owe each other. Everyone can agree that although, in this context, recommendations or suggestions are welcome, neither invective nor demands of any kind are acceptable.

To return to the point of not having called for the holding of elections, the Council will recall the explanation provided here by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of my country, as well as by me, on the topic of the opposition, which once rejected the partial electoral calendar and rejected the comprehensive electoral calendar twice. It will also recall the electoral register that was not updated after the 2006 elections and the need — following the audit of the International Organization of la Francophonie, the Group of Experts and the Independent National Electoral Commission — to update it to include those Congolese who had recently reached voting age and those who were abroad. The Independent National Electoral Commission therefore could not convene elections with a non-existant electoral register.

Finally, with regard to broadening the dialogue, I must once again recall that it is intended to be inclusive, in accordance with the decree of our Head of State. It is with this mind, as we have said, that the Government has responded favourably to several demands of the opposition. It is also to that end that the facilitator has reached out broadly to convince all political actors in the country from all political leanings to engage in dialogue. Only those political actors of the opposition who are absent from today's dialogue freely chose not to participate in it; it was not the Facilitator who excluded them, much less my Government, which from the outset of the dialogue requested the support of the Council by way of a letter from our Permanent Mission in September.

In another confidence-building measure, my Government has amply demonstrated its good faith by taking appropriate steps, as I have already mentioned, with a view to easing the situation. While there may be political actors who are prosecuted for reasons other than political ones, the rule of law requires all citizens of the country to enjoy equal rights before the law. It would be wrong for the Government to intervene in the interest of certain people in purely private affairs, pitting individuals against each other.

As the Council is surely aware and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General has noted, that opposition group — in reaction to the dialogue being held with the support of the international community — held a closed meeting during which it adopted positions that are in breach of the Constitution. The opposition's threats to wreak havoc and call for an uprising and violence must be condemned unequivocally. We called the attention of the Council on 23 June (see S/PV.7724) with the intention of forewarning it of the situation when we stated that the Council is the United Nations organ responsible for maintaining international peace and security. It has the weighty responsibility to work towards peace and prevent the outbreak of all conflict.

Thus, any discourse emerging from the Council that does not promote an atmosphere of trust or that aggravates tensions could have very serious consequences on the ground for Member States.

As we said yesterday, the tensions in my country today are in part due to resolution 2277 (2016), the provisions of which have been interpreted in various manners. Given the way the situation has evolved in my country, what we expect from the international community in general and the Security Council in particular, as the Representatives of Uruguay and Venezuela have just said, is its continued support to the facilitator and the political agreement resulting from the dialogue under way.

We welcome the resumption of cooperation between the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC) and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). We hope that such cooperation will produce rapid results in order to allow the people in the east of our country to live in peace and freely go about their daily lives. That is why my Government prioritizes the joint mission that has been tasked to FARDC and MONUSCO to neutralize all armed groups in the country by December.

The Secretary-General's report (S/2016/833) also notes the presence of several hundred armed groups and a number of civilians from South Sudan in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Minister for Foreign Affairs of my country met on this issue with the leaders of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations during his trip to New York. My delegation maintains the position held by the Head of the Congolese diplomatic corps on that occasion. The United Nations knows the precise conditions under which these people arrived in our country. The Democratic Republic of the Congo does not intend on reliving the its past experiences with the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda. We therefore believe that the United Nations will take all necessary measures to relocate the South Sudanese nationals.

We cannot reiterate often enough the fact that the people of eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo have known no peace peace and for several years have lived under the reule of foreign and national armed groups. The humanitarian disaster resulting from this situation should drive us to find immediate solutions so that the people of the Great Lakes region of Africa can live at home and in peace, and enjoy Goal 16 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In that context, my country thanks the Governments of the Netherlands, Norway and the United Kingdom for financing the Peacebuilding Fund, which has allowed us to implement plans and strategies to stabilize the provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

I cannot conclude without extending my Government's gratitude to the United Nations, and especially to the Special Representative of Secretary-General for the Democratic Republic of the Congo for their commitment and devotion to the cause of my country and the Great Lakes region. I also express my country's thanks and gratitude to all members of the Council.

The President: I now invite members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 11.05 a.m.